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2008

Online at <http://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/15840/>

MPRA Paper No. 15840, posted 26. June 2009 06:30 UTC

Learning Entrepreneurship in a Multicultural Context

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays learning entrepreneurship in higher education became an important issue. International experiences promote the relationship between students from several countries in a multicultural context.

In this sense it was developed an entrepreneurial game where tutors have the role to support students during the activities. The objective of entrepreneurial game objective is to create a business idea and develop a small business plan to present to the group.

The general aim of this paper is to describe this international experience of Setúbal Business week. The specific goals are:

- Understand how students learning in an international environment;
- Understand how international multicultural groups function;
- Evaluate how this kind of game improve a set of competencies, such as entrepreneurial spirit, capacity to work in an international team, oral communication, creativity, confidence and research skills;
- Evaluate business week performance in order to improve future events.

The study concludes with some recommendations and remarks about learning in an entrepreneurship in a multicultural environment.

KEY- WORDS: Entrepreneurial Game; Multiculturalism; International Environment

Introductory Note

Learning entrepreneurship in a multicultural context is the challenge of actual societies. In this context, higher education institutions can assume an essential role in entrepreneurial process.

The aim of this work is to describe and evaluate the international experience developed during the *Business Week* which was for the first time, an entrepreneurial game. This activity involved students and teachers from 7 countries during one week in Setúbal – Portugal.

This work was divided into two parts. The first part includes a conceptual approach based in literature review, and the second part presents an empirical study developed in Setúbal Business Week.

PART I. THEORETICAL APPROACH

1. Entrepreneurship Education

Nowadays, the knowledge-based society stresses the role of innovation, demanding a more entrepreneurial society as a way to increase economic growth, expand employment, and to increase the competitiveness of economies (European Commission, 2003). In Europe, where unemployment is high and where Lisbon Agenda claims for more competitiveness, entrepreneurship education may be one of the few unexploited cost-effective

micro-economic tools available for governments in order, to, effectively develop local economies (McMullan and Gillin, 2001).

In this context, universities and other higher institutes have a crucial role in development of entrepreneurial programmes to stimulating improvement of competences. Teaching will need to focus more upon entrepreneurial pedagogy with a stronger and more holistic, integrated approach to knowledge.

In this perspective, it is important to discuss what capacities and competencies will need to be developed and what changes will need to be made and how they may be best facilitated if the impact of current initiatives is to be sustainable (Gibbs, 2005).

2. Multicultural Context

Working with multicultural groups is a challenge which involves students and teachers. The adoption of relevant multicultural curricula, the use of culturally sensitive assessment and intervention strategies, are relevant in apprenticeship perspective. Teacher must attend to three major components: awareness, knowledge, and skills (Sue, Arredondo & McDavis, 1992; Sue et al., 1982). According with Sanchez (1995), *“the awareness component involves professionals examining their own values, myths, stereotypes, and world view. Knowledge entails developing a non-stereotyping, flexible understanding of cultural, social, and family dynamics of diverse groups, along with a comprehension of the critical socio-political, historical, and economic contexts in which people from diverse multicultural groups are embedded. Skills require the development of culturally sensitive, flexible, and empowering treatment and .assessment strategies that are accompanied by communication skills, the integration of multicultural and diversity issues in various treatment modalities, multicultural consultation, and advocacy skills.”*

The case study described in the next section will consider this approach, promoting this kind of education experience through the creation of multicultural groups, including students from several nationalities (Portugal, Spain, Belgium, Netherlands, Finland, Czech Republic, Poland and Latvia,). The activities were expressed and resolved within various cultural groups (Lee, 1995).

3. Business Week

The Business Week project provides a possibility to learn in an international environment for students.

This project is some kind of intensive program which takes place during one week. The objectives of BW are to:

- Encourage efficient and multinational teaching of specialist topics which might otherwise not be taught at all, or only in a very restricted number of universities;
- Enable students and teachers to work together in multinational groups and so benefit from special learning and teaching conditions not available in a single institution, and to gain new perspectives on the topic being studied;
- Allow members of the teaching staff to exchange views on teaching content and new curricula approaches and to test teaching methods in an international classroom environment. (*Erasmus Intensive Programs-European Union 2005*).

This BWS was a unique possibility for students from low income families to have an international experience to work with students from different countries and to test their own capacities. The ESCE supported 2/3 of expenses of accommodation and meals during 5 days of the game while students paid the remaining 1/3. Even then some of our students quoted themselves to collect money for the participation fee of one college. The students have an opportunity to learn from each others to know a foreign culture and improve their language skills.

All students were accommodated on tourist traditional country-houses together and in rooms on multinational groups. This forced them to start to socialise with students from other cultures.

This Intensive One Week Program was organized both by teachers and students.

Business Week Setúbal counted with the participation of 56 students on educational activities and 15 students-volunteers.

There were 24 Portuguese students and 32 foreign students: 10 from Belgium, 7 from Netherlands; 5 from Poland; 5 from Latvia and 5 from Spain. The working language was English.

Beyond the pedagogical issues, students which participated in this business week have had many different activities.

The involvement of students' volunteers was very important to the success of the BWS. They have met the foreign students on airport and accompanied them to their accommodation. The volunteers also prepared the welcoming day activities. They were coordinated by one student-volunteer, which designed and organized all activities as his final project on his scholar curricula.

This activity also involved about 10 teachers from ESCE which participated as tutors of the working groups and 3 coordinators – general coordinator, pedagogical coordinator and logistic coordinator.

The foreign students were accompanied by lectures which also participated on pedagogical and cultural activities. The foreign lectures shared the tutoring of working groups with Portuguese lectures. Beyond the tutoring activities the lectures have had a possibility to discuss the future programmes to decide the strategy for the improvement of the IBWN and to discuss the evaluation inquiry which was proposed on BWS edition. The result of the inquiry is discussed in the second part of this work.

The Business Week Setúbal takes part of the International Business Week network which involves 13 schools in 8 different European countries.

This Intensive One Week Program was organized by students and teachers alike.

The pedagogical, logistic and institutional contacts were the teacher's responsibility.

As the school didn't receive any funding it was compulsory to find sponsors. The BWS has some sponsors which supported some cost namely with transports and with gifts we offer students and teachers. This was another task of BWS coordinators.

PART II - Entrepreneurial Game: Case study

1. Entrepreneurial Game: A brief description

The entrepreneurial game took place in Setúbal during the Business Week dedicated to "Entrepreneurship". In it there were 56 students and 11 teachers from 7 countries¹. Students were divided by seven groups and each group had 2 tutors (one Portuguese and another for a foreign country). Tutors had a special role in the game to support students during the activities. The entrepreneurial game also was an opportunity for tutors to work in a multicultural environment in apprenticeship perspective.

The entrepreneurial game objective is to create a business idea, in other words, to develop a small business plan to present to the group. This Business plan activity improves various attitudes/skills:

- creativity, confidence and team working.

Entrepreneurial games have to promote the following competencies:

- entrepreneurial spirit;
- capacity to work in an international team;
- oral communication;
- creativity;
- confidence;
- research skills.

¹ Portugal, Spain, Belgian, Netherlands, Poland, Latvia, Czech Republic

In order to achieve the competences, this game follows a set of pedagogical methodologies. The game uses active methodologies to support students to develop new ideas for their business start-ups (see Annex 1- Activities Programme: Entrepreneurial Game).

The entrepreneurial game includes several tasks:

1. Opening Lecture, where it was presented the philosophy, methodology and planning of game activities.
2. Discovery Group activity, with the aim to create a group spirit and to attain better knowledge of each other.
3. Brainstorming- in order to develop a business idea each group must present in 30 minutes at least 30 business ideas.
4. Process of selecting ideas- one group must choose the best idea of different group. This activity allows everyone participate in the selection of each business idea, Involving all participants.
5. Sketch of Business Plan- students should sketch “The one Page Business Plan (OPBP)”². The OPBP is a very straightforward, versatile, consistent, flexible tool and can be used for a variety of purposes. The use of key words and short phrases tells the reader or audience that only the essence of the business concept is being presented for review. In Business Week Entrepreneurial game the OPBP will be used as a summary exercise of a traditional business plan.
6. Student presentation- each group presented their Business Plan in an auditorium. At the end all the assistance voted in the best Business Plan.
7. Closing Activity- formal ending activities and announcement of the first best Business plan and prizes delivery.

4. Methodology

² Hackbert (2000)

In the end of BWS was made the inquiry³ (annex 2⁴) to entrepreneurship Business Week students and teachers, in November 2007. The scale applied in inquiry comprehended items between 1 and 5. The methodology chosen to analyse this inquiry was several hypothesis tests. The data analysis was based in descriptive statistics supported in the inquiry results. To test our hypothesis we used several variables such as leadership; group cohesion; competencies, creativity and confidence.

2.1. Hypothesis

According with the literature review this research has the following hypothesis:

H1: Each group identified a leader.

H2: The groups revealed cohesion during activities.

H3: The entrepreneurial game promotes entrepreneurial competencies in a multicultural context.

H3.1: The entrepreneurial game promotes entrepreneurial spirit (scale higher or equal to 3).

H3.2: The entrepreneurial game promotes creativity (scale higher or equal to 3).

H3.3: The entrepreneurial game promotes confidence (scale higher or equal to 3).

H3.4: The entrepreneurial game promotes research skills (scale higher or equal to 3).

H3.5: The entrepreneurial game promotes team working (scale higher or equal to 3).

3. Results

General characteristics

³ The answer ratio of the inquiry was about 71 % of all participants.

⁴ Attending to the objective of this paper we used/analysed only part of the inquiry questions.

This section presents the main results about a set of participant's characteristics. This sample represents the total of population, constituted by 80,0% of students and 20,0% of teachers (Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Type of participants

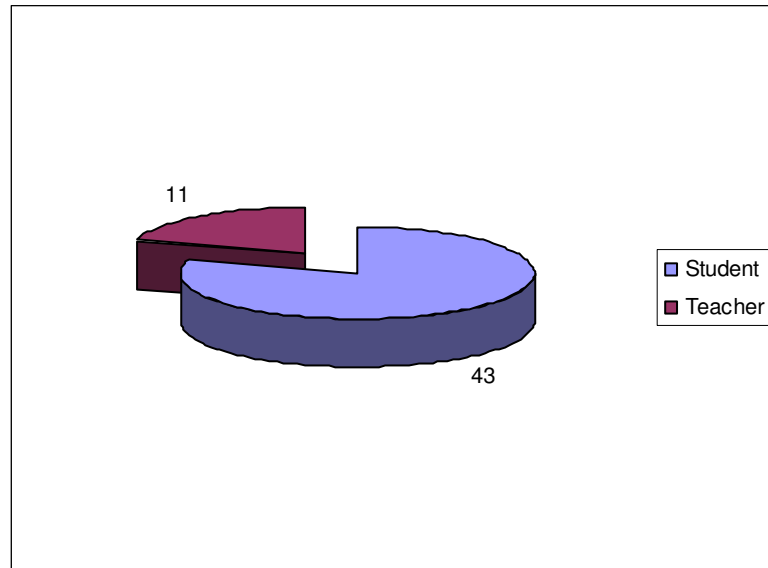
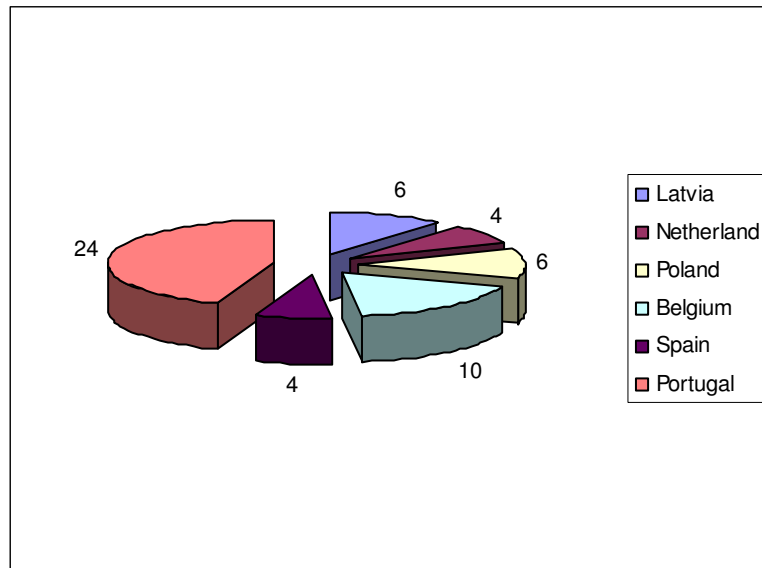


Figure 2 illustrates that the 55,5% of the participants were from Latvia, Netherland, Poland, Belgium and Spain, and 44,5% from Portugal.

Figure 2 - Nationality of Participants



Statistical results

This objective of this section is to present the main statistical results of the inquiry in order to confirm or refuse the hypotheses announced in the study.

Table 1 presents the participants evaluation of the activities developed in the entrepreneurial game. The average value of all these activities is higher than 3, proving the involvement of the group in all tasks. In addition, standard deviation is in all cases lower than 1 provided evidence concerning consensus in answers.

Table 1- Entrepreneurial activities

	Mean	S.Deviat.
Opening Lecture	3,647	0,913
Discovery group activity	3,698	0,972
Brainstorming	4,245	0,830
Process of selecting idea	4,057	0,969
Draft of Business Plan	3,774	0,869
Student presentation	4,057	0,795
Closing activity	4,000	0,843

Only 17 students answered affirmatively concerning the existence of a leader in the group. That means that *H1: Each group identified a leader*) is not confirmed (Table 2).

Table 2 also demonstrates that 53,5% of students considered that the results were achieved and 76,7% affirmed that their suggestions were taken into account,

accepting the existence of group cohesion. This confirmed *H2: The groups revealed cohesion during activities.*

Table 2- Groups functioning

Leader in the group	17
The results were achieved	23
Your suggestions taken into account	33

Regarding the improvement of entrepreneurial competencies in a multicultural context, 63,0% of students reached them (Table 3), confirming *H3: The entrepreneurial game promotes entrepreneurial competencies in a multicultural context. This hypothesis is subdivided in sub-hypotheses H3.1, H3.2, H3.3, H3.4, H3.5 referred in table 2.*

Table 3- Entrepreneurial competencies

	Mean	S.Deviat.
Entrepreneurial spirit	3,700	0,995
Work in multicultural team	4,340	0,688
Oral communication	3,820	0,896
Creativity	3,800	0,904
Confidence	3,837	0,657
Research skills	3,354	0,911
Team working	4,080	0,900

Concerning entrepreneurial spirit the average value is higher or equal than 3 validating *H3.1: The entrepreneurial spirit (scale higher or equal to 3).* Also for creativity, the average value is higher or equal than 3 confirming *H3.2: The entrepreneurial game promotes creativity (scale higher or equal to 3).* Confidence is also one of the competencies that students considered higher confirming *H3.3: The entrepreneurial game promotes confidence (scale higher or equal to 3).* The research skills were also in scale higher than 3 confirming *H3.4: The entrepreneurial game promotes research skills (scale higher or equal to 3).* Finally concerning teamwork the average value is also higher than 3 validating *H3.5: The entrepreneurial game promotes team working (scale higher or equal to 3).* All sub-hypotheses allowed standard deviation with values less than 1, representing a lower dispersion of responses.

4. Concluding Remarks

The results analysis allowed for the conclusion that participants improved entrepreneurial competencies due to their participation in the entrepreneurial game. The activities included in the entrepreneurial game followed a perspective of “learning by doing”, increasing a fair competitiveness between students.

Multicultural teamwork increased availability to apprenticeship in innovative context.

This international experience allowed for the overtaking of cultural and linguistic barriers, and created an environment agreeable to apprenticeship.

Group dynamics were diverse and the majority of the groups assumed the achieving of the goals game, however the strategies inside the groups were different. In some cases the existence of a leader was important to the group results, in other cases it was not possible to identify a group leader. The role of the leader in such groups influenced the behaviour of group elements, in order to allow what suggestions would be taken into account.

The involvement and enthusiasm of all participants – students and teachers, reinforced by a parallel social program contributed to the success of this initiative.

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Annex 1. Activities Programme: Entrepreneurial Game

Day	Morning	Afternoon	Observations	Pedagogical Materials
Tuesday 6/11	10.00h - Lecture about the entrepreneurial process 11.00h – Team group discovery activity 12.00 – “given a name to your group”	Social activities	10.00h- Amphitheatre Karting Palmela 11.00h Work Room 1. Tutor and subgroup presentations 2. Discovery team group 3. Each group must name itself and draft a logotype. Than must present the name and logotype to others groups	Lesson (paper) Work Guide
Wednesday 7/11	10.00h Business Idea	Social activities	Brain-storming (<30 ideas in 30 minutes) 2.Ideas selection 30 minutes	Flip chart and marking pens

	11.00h -13.00h Business Plan		1. Internet research on and drafting One Page Business Plan (OPBP)	Pedagogical guide (see 6.)
Thursday 8/11	10.00h – 12.00h Presentation preparation	14.00h-17.00h Presentation and voting for the best idea	14.00h-16.30h Presentation OPBP (20 m each group) 16.30h – presentation and peer selection of the best idea	

Note: All activities in days 6, 7, 8/11 are developed in Palmela karting

Annex 2. Business Week Evaluation

I- General Issues

1- Country: _____

2- Student ☐

3- Teacher ☐

4- What is your impression about the following facilities (1=bad and 5=best):

1 2 3 4 5

Transportation to Kip ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Lodging (Rooms) ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Food ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Coffee Break ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Localization ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

5- If you have any suggestions please write them down

II- Pedagogical Game

6- We want to know how your group did functioned:

Was there a leader in the group? ☐

Did everybody work in the same way? ☐

The results were achieved? ☐

Do you think your group reach the competencies? ☐

7- Did you at the end of this Business Week improve the following competencies (1=bad and 5=best):

1 2 3 4 5

Entrepreneurial spirit ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Comment_____

Work in multicultural team ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Comment_____

Oral communication ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Comment_____

Creativity ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Comment_____

Confidence ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Comment_____

Research skills ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Comment_____

Team working ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Comment_____

8- What do you think about pedagogical methodologies

9- How do you evaluate the following activities (1=bad and 5=best):

9.1- Tuesday 6/11

1 2 3 4 5

Opening Lecture ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Comment _____

Discovery group activity ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Comment _____

9.2- Wednesday 7/11

Brainstorming ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Comment _____

Process of selecting idea ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Comment _____

Draft of Business Plan ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Comment _____

9.3- Thursday 8/11

Student's presentation ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Comment _____

9.4- Friday 9/11

Closing activity



Comment _____

10- Do you have any remarks (positive/negative) on this international experience?

III- Social Activities

11- Do you have any positive/negative remarks on the social activities?

Thanks for your participation!